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Following is a summary of last month's major developments in  
Northern Greece:

NATIONAL ELECTIONS: PASOK PREVAILS EMPHATICALLY IN NORTHERN  
GREECE, ABOLISHES MINISTRY OF MACEDONIA-THRACE

11. (U) Winner of this month's Greek national election PASOK (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) made substantial gains in traditionally conservative Northern Greece, too. In Thrace, the two current Muslim MPs were re-elected with PASOK, while the decision by the far-right LAOS leader Georgios Katratzaferis to stand in the Prefecture of Rodopi (central Thrace) did not appear to influence results significantly. In the Prefecture of Evros however (eastern Thrace, on the Greek-Turkish border), in an apparent reaction to the large numbers of illegal immigrants being smuggled into Greece through Turkey, LAOS elected an MP for the first time. The new government decided to abolish the Ministry of Macedonia-Thrace and instead, move to Thessaloniki the Offices of the Deputy Minister of Finance and the Deputy Minister of Interior. The initiative sparked an outcry from main opposition New Democracy, denouncing it as a "national retreat" on the name issue with neighboring Macedonia.

MUSLIM MINORITY VOTE IN THRACE

12. (U) Media in Thrace reported that although two Muslim MPs were elected during the general election of October 4, the "minority leadership" was disappointed as it had hoped to elect as many as four. Reports attributed the result to the fact that not as many Greek Muslims came from Turkey (where they currently reside) to vote, as were expected. Also, not all Muslims voted for Muslim candidates, as was recommended to minority voters by the minority co-ordinating body "Consultative Committee of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace." Papers report that around "20%" of Muslims voted for Christian candidates. In a post-election dinner hosted by the President of the Consultative Committee, Muslim candidates argued against the Committee's methods of "controlled voting" and advocated for the political emancipation of the minority.

## APPEALS COURT IN THRACE REJECTS TURKISH UNION OF XANTHI APPEAL

13. (SBU) On October 07, the Appeals Court in Thrace rejected the application by the local organization "Turkish Union of Xanthi" to be recognized and registered by that name. The appeal followed an earlier decision on March 27, 2008 by the European Court of Human Rights that vindicated the organization and claimed that the Greek state violated the right of Assembly and Association, as stipulated in the European Convention on Human Rights (Ref A.) The Appeals Court however, concluded that the ECHR's ruling was not binding in this case. Additionally, it claimed that the European Court focused only on the cultural activities of the organization, overlooking the political ones that could potentially "endanger public order in the area". Lastly, lawyer Ioannis Hatziantoniou who participated in the trial stated that Article 12 of the organization's statute -"Monitoring of the members' social and national beliefs"- ran contrary to the Constitution and thus, could not be accepted. Post sources believe the "Turkish Union of Xanthi"'s lawyer Orhan Hajiibram will now take the issue to the Supreme Court of Greece.

## POMAKS CLAIM HARASSMENT BY THE TURKISH DELEGATION AT OSCE MEETING

14. (U) Local media in Thrace report that, after addressing last month's OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, two Greek Pomaks were verbally harassed by the present Turkish delegation. The Pomaks had earlier spoken about terrorization

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of their community, orchestrated by the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, "aiming to impose the image of a unified Muslim minority, ethnically Turkish" [Note: The Pomaks are Muslims of Slavic descent and speak a language that could be described as a Bulgarian dialect. End Note]. Papers noted that the Pomaks had to be "saved" by members of the Greek delegation. According to the reports, the incident was brought to the attention of the Meeting's Chairwoman Florian Hohenberg, who promised to look into it further.

## "VATOPEDI" MONKS AND IMPLICATED JUDGE RECEIVE SUSPENDED SENTENCES

15. (U) On October 09, the Appeals Court in Thrace sentenced Abbot Efrem of the Vatopedi Monastery and monk Arsenios to 15 months in prison, suspended for three years, for morally instigating Judge Maria Psalti's failure to announce her Court's decision about the ownership of Vistonida lake promptly. The judge received the same sentence. The so-called "Vatopedi" scandal, a series of illegal land exchanges between the Monastery of Vatopedi and GoG, broke out last year and analysts claim it was instrumental to the eventual fall of the government last month (Ref B).

## UNIVERSITY SURVEY SHOWS ATTICA'S GDP WELL AHEAD OF THESSALONIKI'S

16. (U) On October 21, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki's research group announced the results of a survey, showing that although the GDP in the Prefecture of Attica

(Athens area) increased by 122% between 1996 and 2004, the corresponding figure for Thessaloniki was only 38%, significantly lower than even the national average of 71%. The survey also showed that 65% of Thessaloniki's GDP is generated from the services sector and 30% from industrial activity. Finally, local media reported on data released by the National Statistics Service of Greece, according to which unemployment in Thessaloniki rose by 2.5% to 11.4% in the second quarter of 2009, compared with the same period the year before.

#### SECURITY INCIDENTS

17. (SBU) On October 10, four luxury cars were destroyed in three different areas of Thessaloniki. Earlier, on October 07, two more had been set on fire in the same city. A new group, called "Burn (Porsche) Cayenne Cars" claimed responsibility for the attacks, noting that they were to express solidarity with recently arrested anarchists. In the early evening of October 21, approximately 20 hooded individuals smashed the windows of around 15 luxury stores in downtown Thessaloniki. The stores were closed at the time. A new group, called "Haute Catastrophe Designers" assumed responsibility for the attack shortly after. On October 23, there was a series of gas canister attacks against the offices of leading local PASOK cadres. A new group called the "Council for the Deconstruction of Order" assumed responsibility for the attacks and threatened that local journalists will be targeted in the future. On October 21, an improvised incendiary device exploded at the entrance of the Italian-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce in Thessaloniki, causing minor damage. The "Council for the Deconstruction of Order" assumed responsibility for the attack. On October 30, an improvised incendiary device exploded at the entrance of the Honorary Consulate of Spain. The attack, which took place around 500 yards away from the U.S. Consulate, caused minor damage to the building. No group has assumed responsibility. On October 15, Hellenic Police's Counter-Terrorism Unit discovered six U.S. anti-tank rockets, buried in the mountains of Nea Vrasna, Northern Greece. Last month, eight similar rockets were discovered in the same area (Ref C.) The rockets were corroded with rust and transferred to a military camp. Police contact told post the case was not connected to terrorism.

#### BULGARIAN ARRESTS IN TRAFFICKING CASES

18. (U) On October 07, three Bulgarians, including the mother of  
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an infant, were arrested in the town of Katerini for trying to sell a baby to an undercover policeman for 13,000 (\$19,000), of which, 2,500 (\$3,700) would have gone to the mother. On October 10, two Bulgarians were arrested in Thessaloniki and a third is wanted for running a "begging ring" whereby, they were forcing handicapped Bulgarians to beg and hand them over their profits.

#### NARCOTICS/CONTRABAND

19. (U) On October 13, a Czech national was convicted to 20 years imprisonment for attempted smuggling into Greece of 15 kilos of heroin. He was arrested on the (Greek-Turkish) border station of "Kipi" a year ago. On October 15, three Greek nationals were arrested in Northern Greece for possessing 22 kilos of hashish and 44 cannabis plants. The drugs were confiscated. On October 29, the Thessaloniki Customs Office

confiscated approximately 500,000 packets of cigarettes hidden in a container. The latter had arrived from Port Side, Egypt and a Greek national was the recipient. The cigarettes were of a Greek brand and would have resulted in lost tax revenues of 2.5m (\$3.7m.)

#### INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

¶10. (U) Local media reported factually on the 2009 U.S. State Department International Religious Freedom Report. Newspaper "Makedonia" summed up the references to Greece by mentioning that they primarily comprised of the `bureaucratic problems faced by religious minorities", while there was also inclusion of "an increase in the number of anti-Semitic incidents following Israel's attacks on Gaza".  
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